

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

170537Z Feb 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000310

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#) [PHUM](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: UN OFFICIAL SEES LITTLE IMMEDIATE HOPE FOR
CEASEFIRE

REF: A. KATHMANDU 0280

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 0279

Classified By: AMB. MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) In a February 12 meeting with the Ambassador, Tamrat Samuel, Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs at the UN, said that the UN stands ready to assist in mediation efforts between the Government of Nepal (GON) and Maoists if asked by both sides, but indicated that he saw little immediate prospect of that offer being accepted. Despite maintaining contact with Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai, the UN finds it difficult to discern whether Bhattarai's "forward looking" representations are accurate reflections of the Maoist leadership's thinking. Absent reconciliation between the parties and the Palace, the GON will find it difficult to resume dialogue with the insurgents from a position of strength, Samuel said. The Ambassador and Samuel agreed that the National Human Rights Commission, despite its deficiencies, should be provided technical assistance to help it perform its constitutional mandate. End summary.

DESPITE OFFER, UN FORESEES
NO MEDIATION ROLE SOON

[1](#)2. (U) On February 12 Tamrat Samuel, Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs at the UN, called on the Ambassador to exchange views on the domestic political situation and the ongoing Maoist insurgency. Samuel was accompanied by Matthew Kahane, UNDP Resident Representative.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador described the security picture as "mixed." On one hand, the Maoists have been unable since the end of the ceasefire in August to mount a major successful attack against the security forces. On the other hand, the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) remains unable to reclaim territory under Maoist influence. In addition, the Maoist presence has expanded significantly into the previously unaffected lowland southern Terai area along the Indian border. Maoist extortion has skyrocketed, he noted. Government of Nepal (GON) intelligence capabilities remain insufficient. The Indian government's arrest of two high-ranking Maoists on February 8 is a hopeful sign (Ref A), the Ambassador observed, speculating that it may have been sparked by Indian anger over Maoist publicity of a rally planned to be held in New Delhi on Feb. 15. Although RNA ranks are swelling to 79,000 (up from 55,000 during the same time last year), the growth has been primarily among the lower ranks, he said, with no commensurate increase at the middle and upper levels. This rapid growth has strained RNA command and control capacity in many respects, he noted, including in the area of ensuring respect for human rights.

[1](#)4. (C) Samuel said he found the lack of movement back toward dialogue "very worrying." It appears that since the end of the ceasefire the GON has decided to focus on military, rather than diplomatic, efforts to bring the Maoists back to negotiations. The GON "seems to be thinking what to do next," he opined, and might be persuaded that, having achieved some military strength, now could be the right moment to reconsider talks with the Maoists. If so, it is important that the international community support that inclination, he stressed. The UN stands ready to help to mediate if asked, he asserted.

[1](#)5. (C) As for the Maoists, Prachanda's statement of February 4 that the insurgents are willing to accept UN mediation is "a little encouraging," Samuel said, but it remains difficult to determine their sincerity and readiness for negotiations. He indicated that the UN is in contact with Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai, who "always seems forward looking," but without a clearer picture of the "internal dynamics and lines

of hierarchy" within the Maoist organization, it is hard to tell if Bhattarai's comments represent accurately the leadership's thinking, Samuel acknowledged. Based on some exchanges with him, the UN believes that the Maoists may have softened their insistence on the constituent assembly, Samuel suggested, but added that their answers to direct questions on this topic remain "vague." Maoist contacts have indicated recently to UN interlocutors that while their bottom line remains that the form of government must be decided by the people, "the methodology (by which that decision is reached) is not important." That possible shift in position offers fresh ground for discussion and compromise if negotiations resume, Samuel said, adding "these issues can be bridged if there is good will" to reach an agreement.

HUMAN RIGHTS

16. (C) The human rights situation also is a cause for concern, Samuel said. Human rights abuses continue by the Maoists and GON security forces, the Ambassador agreed, adding that the Embassy has often counseled the RNA on the need to improve its record. UN efforts to persuade the GON to sign a proposed human rights accord and agree to human rights monitoring will likely fail, he warned, unless the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) makes greater effort to convince the RNA of the merits of the proposal. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) must be strengthened in every sense, Samuel replied, including its impartiality. The Ambassador replied that neither the Maoists or the RNA view the NHRC as impartial. That said, the NHRC is the constitutionally appointed body with a mandate to monitor GON compliance with human rights standards, he acknowledged; if the NHRC is falling short, donors have a responsibility to improve its capacity.

POLITICAL PARALYSIS

17. (C) There remains no clear progress toward reconciliation between the political parties and the Palace, the Ambassador said. He noted that he and other envoys have made frequent representations to the King urging him to make peace with the parties, but there is "always some excuse" for the continued lack of progress. The parties, meanwhile, rather than taking the initiative themselves, are waiting for the King to make the first move. The King's public address of February 8 (Ref B) seemed only to have aggravated the polarization, he observed; instead of imparting a message of conciliation, the King used the opportunity to criticize the parties. Nonetheless, the Ambassador said he does not believe the King plans to reconsolidate royal power, as the parties allege. Even if he wanted to do so, the King is well aware that neither the international community or the Nepali people would tolerate such a step, the Ambassador concluded. While the King always reiterates his commitment to the constitutional monarchy, some people find his interpretation of that concept "questionable," Samuel observed. The question now seems to be on which side falls the onus for reconciliation: the parties or the Palace? Whatever the answer, it will remain difficult for the GON to resume negotiations with the insurgents without first achieving a resolution of the deadlock between the parties and the King, Samuel noted.

COMMENT

18. (C) Periodically over the past three years the Maoists have announced their willingness to accept UN mediation in the conflict; Prachanda's February 4 press release is only the latest installment. In our experience, these statements are not followed by other, more tangible indications of Maoist readiness for peace, e.g., an abatement in killings, bombings, abductions, etc. This last statement seems to be no exception. It seems to us that the Maoists' episodic endorsement of a UN role is motivated by a self-serving desire to appear more peace-loving and more palatable to the international community, as well as by a cynical realization that the GON, under Indian pressure, is unlikely to accept third-party mediation.

MALINOWSKI